

**(Hosea 1:1)** - Hosea was one of God's prophets in the northern kingdom of Israel. He prophesied for about forty-five years at the same time as Isaiah and Micah prophesied in the south. Even though he was in the north, his message mainly concerned the southern kingdom of Judah (1:7). The reason for this was to show that even though as a sinful people (both north and south) they deserved God's judgment of wrath, the hope of salvation for sinners would come out of Judah. This is Christ Who would come from the tribe of Judah (*Gen. 49:8-10*). The background of Hosea's prophecy was spiritual and moral depravity, unbelief, idolatry, and decline for Israel. The nation was politically and materially prosperous, but spiritually and morally poor. The nation here was a picture of fallen, sinful humanity which began in Adam as spiritually rich and full. But as Adam fell into sin and depravity, so did the whole human race. We who are God's true spiritual children have been brought by God from spiritual death and poverty to spiritual life and prosperity by God's grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(Hosea 1:2)** - The name "*Hosea*" means "salvation." The LORD gave Hosea a very strange command. He commanded His prophet to find and marry a prostitute, a notoriously great sinner! This does not fit with man's views and ways of salvation and righteousness. Man's way is salvation for those who do or decide something to deserve salvation. But God saves sinners and justifies the ungodly. Christ came into the world to save sinners! He told the Pharisees that the righteous need no savior. The well need no physician. Christ is the great Physician Who heals sin-sick people. He came not to call the righteous, but SINNERS to repentance (*Mark 2:17; cf. Luke 5:30-32; 7:36-39*).

Why would God give such a strange command? "*For the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.*" God gave Hosea this strange commandment to illustrate graphically the sin, unfaithfulness, and spiritual whoredom of the nation Israel. This also illustrates our own spiritual death, depravity, and whoredom. Unregenerate people will admit that they are not perfect and need a little help to be saved, but God the Holy Spirit brings us down in conviction to know and confess that we are the worst of sinners, even spiritual prostitutes who have willingly sold ourselves to idols and turned away from the true and living God. If salvation is to come our way, it cannot be upon any merit or willingness in us. It must come by the free, sovereign, and powerful will and grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 5:20-21; Eph. 2:1-10*).

As this book describes Hosea's love for Gomer, her infidelity, despising his love and goodness toward her, and the gracious triumph of his love over her, it also describes God free and sovereign love for His elect. God loves us with an everlasting love, and He sent Christ to die for us because of this love (*John 3:16; 1 John 4:10*). His love is redeeming love, and we do not earn or deserve His love. Christ saves and will possess His bride, God's elect, His church.

**(Hosea 1:3)** - As "*Hosea*" means "savior," he was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ Who was commanded by the Father (and Who agreed willingly) to come to this fallen earth and take a wife from among the fallen spiritual harlots of humanity - God's elect people who had been given (betrothed) to Christ before the world began. "*Gomer*" means "consumption." She represents God's elect consumed with sin and by sin. It also means "consummation," for as we in ourselves are the consummation of sin and depravity, in Christ, according to God's purpose and will, we are the consummation of His great unconditional love. Gomer was the "*daughter of Diblaim*" whose name means "dried" or "dead." This illustrates how we by nature are dead children from a dead father, Adam.

**(Hosea 1:4-5)** - The Lord prophesies to Israel through Hosea's three children. First came "Jezreel" which means "God will scatter." In this name God reveals that Israel would soon be scattered in exile by a conquering Assyrian army. Jezreel refers to the Valley of Jezreel, where Jehu massacred all the descendants of Ahab, thus establishing his throne (*2 Kings 10:11*). God directed Hosea to name his son Jezreel to confirm His promise to avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel by judging the house of Jehu. God "*will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.*" This illustrates God's sure judgment against all sinners to whom sin is imputed. Our hope of salvation is to not have sins imputed to us but to have Christ's righteousness imputed to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:32-34*).

**(Hosea 1:6)** - Next came a daughter named "Lo-ruhamah" which means "no mercy." This shows the nature of the conditional covenant God made with Israel. The law demanded perfect obedience, and it provided for no mercy when its commands were broken. The law said, "Do and live, disobey and die." What a solemn reminder that for sinners such as us, there is no salvation, no mercy, no grace in the law. Mercy and grace come to us by virtue of another covenant, the everlasting covenant of grace, conditioned on Christ, the Messiah (*John 1:17; Rom. 3:19-26*). The perfection of righteousness required by the law can only be found in Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. This is HIS righteousness imputed to us and which we receive by God-given faith in Him (*Rom. 10:4*).

**(Hosea 1:7)** - Here is a prophecy of Christ Who would come in His human nature through the tribe of Judah. God purposed to "*have mercy upon the house of Judah.*" WHY? We know that Judah had a few faithful kings (*ex., 2 Kings 18:1-8*); but Judah was essentially no better than Israel. There were some brief times of national obedience in Judah, but it did not last. And by its very nature mercy cannot be deserved. If you deserve leniency and blessings, it is a matter of justice, not mercy. Mercy can only be shown to the guilty. Therefore, it is within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom He will show mercy (*Rom. 9:15*). So, this show of mercy was not a testimony to Judah's goodness but of God's purpose of grace that would come to His chosen people through Christ (*Gen. 49:10*).

**(Hosea 1:8-9)** - Hosea and Gomer then had another son named "Loammi" which means "not my people." Again, we see the nature of the law covenant which provided for no salvation, no eternal life, no eternal fellowship with God. God said, "*for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God.*" God would eventually divorce Himself from this nation (*Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8*). This conditional covenant would be abolished by the fulfilling work of Christ for God's spiritual people.

**(Hosea 1:10–2:1)** - This speaks of THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL. Both Paul and Peter, by Divine inspiration, apply this prophecy both to believing Jews and Gentiles within the true church (*Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:9-10*). There is a direct reference to God's covenant with Abraham (*Gen. 22:17 - cf., Gal. 3:13-14; 3:26-29; 6:14-16*), which would be fulfilled in spiritual Israel in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6ff.; Eph. 2:11ff.*). "*For great shall be the day of Jezreel*" - Where and when God sows His grace for and in His people through Christ, not His wrath; where God scatters His people, His children, as seed throughout the world to preach the Gospel of His grace in Christ, THIS IS A DAY OF SALVATION AND RESTORATION. God calls His elect in Christ "Ammi," which is "MY PEOPLE" and "Ruhamah," which means "HAVING OBTAINED MERCY" (*cf., Isaiah 62:1-5; Jer. 31:31-34*).